

West Tunnel Viaduct  
Pennsylvania Railroad  
Spanning Conemaugh Dam  
.25 mile S of Conemaugh Dam  
Tunnelton Vicinity  
Indiana  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-268

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
WEST TUNNEL VIADUCT

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**Location:** Spanning Conemaugh River, .25 mile South of Conemaugh Dam, between Tunnelton Vicinity, Conemaugh Township, Indiana County, and New Alexandria Vicinity, Derry Township, Westmoreland County

USGS Quad: Blairsville (1:24000)  
UTM: 17/638400/4480075

**Date of Construction:** 1907

**Builder:** Pennsylvania Railroad

**Present Owner:** U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

**Present Use:** Access road

**Significance:** Part of the extensive Pennsylvania Railroad system, the West Tunnel Viaduct carried the main line of the PRR until tracks were relocated in the early 1950s as a result of the Conemaugh River Dam project.

**Project Information:** In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Indiana County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1993), edited by Ken Rose and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

**Compiler:** Richard Quinn, Historian

History:

**DESCRIPTION:** Spanning the Conemaugh River on five stone arches, this 1907 viaduct carried the main line of the Pennsylvania Rail Road (PRR) until tracks were relocated in the early 1950s as a result of the Conemaugh River Dam project. The viaduct now carries an access road to the powerhouse on the east side of the river below the dam.

**HISTORY:** The Pennsylvania Rail Road acquired the North Western Rail Road/Western Pennsylvania Rail Road line between Blairsville and Saltsburg in 1870, and continued to operate it as the Western Pennsylvania Division. Near Tunnelton, the rail line crossed on a bridge to a tunnel through Bow Ridge. In 1907 the PRR replaced the old tunnel and bridge with new structures. The new viaduct, constructed on a slight curve, is located below the old bridge (whose piers remain). The viaduct continued in use until at least 1950, when a new high trestle deck girder bridge, 880' long, was placed in service. This later relocation was necessitated by reservoir requirements for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Conemaugh Dam project.

Sources:

- Consolidated Rail Corporation. Conrail List of Undergrade and Overgrade Structures in Specified Counties. Philadelphia: Consolidated Rail Corporation, 1988.
- Interview with William Dzombak, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Conemaugh River Dam, Saltsburg, July 1990.